Dorota Malczewska-Pawelec and Tomasz Pawelec

A Study of Memory Politics as a Research Program for a Transnational History of Communism in East-Central Europe

Abstract: The authors' aim is to discuss and evaluate research possibilities offered by the study of memory politics (a part of the memory studies) in order to provide a model for comparative and/or transnational study of post-1945 East-Central European History. In every country of the region that fell under the communist yoke, the new rulers attempted to remodel the sphere of social imaginary. Images and ideas of the past were the first among those to be rebuild. So, the sphere of memory politics seems to be an area where the basic community of historical fates and experiences of societies is most clearly visible. This encourages to make comparisons, opens the possibility of posing similar research question and testing the same theoretical model on empirical materials referring to various countries. The authors develop such a model (based on idea of memory politics understood as a kind of social practice), identify major areas of research and specify source materials suitable for them. In the course of their argument they explain why it could become a basis of an approach suitable for the study of East-Central European regional history on transnational level. In this context, the authors discuss the great synthesizing potential for writing modern history inherent in the study of practices related to the creation, modification and preservation of historical memory.

Key words: memory politics, communism, East-Central Europe, transnational history

We contend that the generalized, thorough description and explanation of the influence of communism on the Soviet Union's subject nations of East-Central Europe remains an important challenge for historians of the recent past in our part of Europe. Despite huge efforts already made by a considerable number of researchers, there is still a great deal that remains to be achieved. Acutely visible is a shortage of theoretical and model approaches, which would enable us to cross the level of the lay perception of historical phenomena. This problem always arises with respect to "the historian of yesterday," who inevitably continues to be marked by the participant's perspective of examined events and who is entangled in ideological disputes on the sense and meaning of what directly preceded/conditioned the present (and for many it still continues to be part of).[1] In the case of the abovementioned area of research, the difficulties are increased by the repercussions of many decades of communist thought control and reality manipulation practices. The lack of elementary transparency in a large number of social spheres meant that, as a consequence, today's historians frequently have to face fundamental

1 See Jan Pomorski, "Metodologiczne problemy historii najnowszej," [*Methodological Problems of Current History*] *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, vol. 31, no. 9 (1987), p. 4.

difficulties as early as at the stage of defining source basis and formulating elementary factual statements. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the majority of their investigative efforts have concentrated on determining these basic facts, figures and dates, with reflections on deeper mechanisms of the functioning of communism being "put on the back burner" (i.e., "as soon as we have a sufficient source basis and facts"). Meanwhile, such reflection seems indispensable. Only by virtue of this reflection – from the perspective of a theoretical model – would these facts gain an essential historical significance and enable us to explain and grasp the phenomenon of building "real socialism" in East-Central Europe. It may also constitute certain protection against submitting oneself to direct influences of diverse ideological and political 'options' (attitude towards various aspects of the communist 'legacy' in the countries of our region is still one of the key differentiating factors in this respect). Furthermore, it can make it easier for one to distance oneself from the subjective, individual knowledge of the living participants of events.

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to discuss and evaluate research possibilities offered by the study of memory politics in order to provide a model for comparative and/or transnational study[2] of post-1945 East-Central European History. The category of "memory politics"[3] (GER: *Geschichtspolitik*, although this term seems a bit misleading) refers to the specific area of activity of the state related to collective memory. It is usually assumed that a very significant role in the process of collective memory formation is played by the so-called memory agents (or memory actors).[4] These are influential personalities, various social bodies, institutions and

2 The term "transnational study" refers to a number of approaches which "notwithstanding the significant differences between [them – D.M-P. and T.P.] (…) are all characterized 'by the desire to break out of the nation-state … as the category of analysis, and especially to eschew the ethnocentrism (…).' Transnational approaches enable researchers to transcend 'the national paradigm' by highlighting the nation-state's connections and interdependence to regional and global developments…". Constantin Iordachi, Peter Apor, "Studying Communist Dictatorships: From Comparative to Transnational History," *East Central Europe*, vol. 40 (2003), pp. 1–35 (quotation p. 4).

3 An alternative term "politics of history" or – much more popular – the German equivalent *Geschichtspolitik* is misleading as it refers not to history (or the past itself) but to the way(s) that history/past is being remembered within a given society. See also: Dorota Malczewska-Pawelec, Tomasz Pawelec, *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej. Porównawcze studia nad praktykami manipulacji zbiorową pamięcią Polaków w czasach stalinowskich* [*A Revolution in Historical Memory: Comparative Studies on the Practices of Manipulating Poles' Collective Memory in the Stalin Period*] (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), pp. 18–19.

4 See, e.g., Jay Winter, Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp*

the likes that strive – in many ways – to disseminate a vision of the past suitable for them (which quite often equates to serving their own interests) within a given society. Memory agents may emerge spontaneously (e.g., a group of people who share a peculiar historical experience of great importance may coalesce into such an agent) or could be created intentionally, even "from above." In fact, several institutions of contemporary society (be they political institutions or institutions of education, social control, or culture, etc.) act – more or less intentionally – as memory agents. Such activity may become quite significant for them (i.e., it may take up a large part of their functioning) and may become quite influential as a factor co-forming the current shape of collective memory.[5] When acting in the sphere of memory formation, the State becomes a memory agent as well – usually a very powerful one – especially if it is a non-democratic or even totalitarian state. It may occur in the latter case that state authorities simply attempt to control the collective memory[6] in order to accomplish various political and ideological goals (most often these stem from the intention of legitimizing their political position and the social order they support).

This was exactly the case in several countries of East-Central Europe, which – after 1944–1945 – fell under the communist yoke. In all of them, radical efforts to build a new social and political system, as well as a new moral and ideological order (both modeled on Soviets) were undertaken. Of course, a necessary component of this large-scale enterprise in social engineering (and the one explicitly defined as "the revolutionary project") was the task of creating a "new socialist man". This "new man" had to be endowed with a "new memory", as well. This memory should have confirmed a vision of national past serving the needs of communists, that is, giving ground to their ideological and political aspirations and, finally, justifying their "historical right" to rule. Not only should the "new" memory have been affirmative towards their preferred values (together with their exemplary personal ideals or "communist heroes"), but also any element that might be seen as redundant and/or harmful from the new rulers' point of view was to be excluded from

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Zofia Wójcicka, *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady 1944–1950* [*The Mourning Interrupted: Polish Controversies over the Memory of Nazi Concentration and Death Camps 1944–1950*] (Warszawa: Trio, 2009).

5 They constitute the so-called "historical apparatus" of a given society/nation. See: "Popular Memory. Theory, Politics, Method," in: *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 73–92.

6 We perceive a given society's collective memory as a number of "realms of memory" (in Pierre Nora's sense of the word) that are arranged in a certain hierarchical order (from more to less important ones). Pierre Nora, "From 'Lieux de mémoire' to Realms of Memory," in: *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, ed. Pierre Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. XV–VII.

it. The intended process of memory rebuilding had to be a very radical one indeed. The sociologist and a memory scholar Andrzej Szpociński once wrote:

> If (…) [revolutionaries – D.M.-P. and T.P] – in the name of a society as a whole – declare a new order to be established, and the society in question, while defining itself as a nation, refers to its own past (as an element of its identity), they will not only have to assume a definite attitude toward [already existing – D.M.-P. and T.P] visions of the national past but also to create such an image of it that will substantiate a thesis that they – the revolutionaries who already seized power – are the ones who are the most fully entitled to remain in authority. (…). In the case of a revolutionary struggle where no compromise is possible, one needs to remove not only these realms of memory which are incompatible with revolutionaries' ideals. The point is that opponents should be 'expropriated' from every possible realm of memory currently present within the collective memory, including those that seem neutral in the context of values transmitted by them. The reason for this is the fact that until this moment all of these realms had remained the 'possession' of the formerly dominating classes.[7]

A regularity described by Szpociński was visible in all countries of the newly established Soviet Bloc.[8] Earlier, in each of them the communists had been a relatively small minority, more or less marginalized within public life and sometimes even stigmatized because of their close affiliation with an external center of power, that is, the Kremlin. Their postulates and political activities – the way they addressed public ills of individual societies within East-Central Europe notwithstanding – were usually at variance with programs of other political groupings, including those opposed to the actual regime.[9] The same can be said of their ideological message, including their advocated visions of the national past. The latter were incompatible both with concepts officially promoted by the powers ruling particular countries and with images spontaneously coalescing within the social consciousness of nationalities and ethnic groups living there. Without the catastrophe of the Second World War and the advent of the Red Army, local communists would have had no chance to seize political power and to begin the large-scale "perekovka dush", that is, the wholesale remodeling of the sphere of social imaginary. Images and ideas of the past were the first among those to be rebuilt. As such,

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7 Andrzej Szpociński, „Kanon historyczny. Pamięć zbiorowa a pamięć indywidualna. Trzy wymiary pamięci zbiorowej," [*Historical Canon. Collective Memory and Individual Memory. Three Dimensions of Collective Memory*] *Studia Socjologiczne*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1983), pp. 138, 140.

8 The timing of the above mentioned process was not identical, however. In some cases it started earlier. On the other hand, it is possible to see that from 1947/1948 a kind of unified direction and increase in the pace of change toward full Stalinism was visible within the whole Soviet-dominated zone.

9 Several attempts at formation the so-called "Populist Fronts" with socialists and other left-oriented groups, undertaken in 1930s, eventually turned out to be futile.

the communist undertakings of creating a new collective memory "from above" appear to us as an essentially transnational phenomenon, which took place within the whole zone of Soviet domination in East-Central Europe at roughly the same time. Thus, the sphere of memory politics seems to be an area where the basic community of historical fates and experiences of societies forced to accept "socialism" is clearly visible.

Obviously, each state demonstrated a measure of uniqueness in this respect. What was surely different was the point of departure of the memorial transformation, that is, the characteristics of collective memories of societies living under the aegis of local states. The shape and content of these memories, concretized in the minds of citizens of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Eastern Germany (shortly after to become the German Democratic Republic) were necessarily quite different. Ideas and attitudes towards the past that were present within the national borders of each of these countries resulted from (1) previous historical experiences of a given national community[10] and (2) from the "uses" made of them by various subjects striving to influence a given society (or its particular strata – especially those opinion-forming) during the period between the two world wars.[11] As for the latter, of particular importance among these subjects were the ruling groups, which – more or less intentionally, more or less systematically – had attempted to model collective views of the past in a direction suitable to them. Furthermore, the way a particular country fall into dependence on Soviets[12] was not unimportant in this respect. The same refers to local differences concerning details of the stabilization of communist rule. The abovementioned diversity of collective memory (inevitably "improper" from the communist point of view) implied a multiplicity and diversity of concrete efforts towards its rebuilding. On the other hand, the intended effects of these undertakings had

10 This does not mean that these collective memories were totally alien to each other. Cases of a shared past (as it was with those who lived together under the rule of Hapsburgs before the First World War) resulted in the fact that some common memorial themes and realms of memory (though not necessarily perceived in the same way) were present within the collective memory of different national communities. In addition to these "connecting" elements, there were also those "dividing" and "conflicting", stemming from the memory of past conflicts, etc.

11 Their goals ranged from a "simple" power seizure to an implementation of variously conceived programs of social, political and/or economic modernization.

12 There was a striking difference between the case of Poland (an official ally of the Great Coalition, in defense of whom Western democracies started their fight with Germany, but eventually sacrificed its sovereignty for their Soviet partner) and that of the German Democratic Republic (a part of the former Nazi German empire of "evil" that was legitimately defeated and then put into a process of "de-Nazification." Cases of other countries should be located somewhere in between – for the most these were more or less forced allies of Hitler at first, later on with greater or smaller measure of success were trying to side with the Coalition.

to be the same in every country in question: "a renewed" memory of "socialist citizenry." It should have (1) offered a vision of the past peopled by communist heroes be they national/local or (foremost) international (i.e., Soviet) – with the domineering figures of Lenin and Stalin standing as creators and leaders of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet Union; (2) de-legitimize social classes and political forces that previously dominated the state and the society; (3) effectively placed communists (together with those whom they declared their ancestors and/or forerunners) at the very center of the national tradition. Thus, set against the real differences of the memorial point of departure we have the expected sameness of the point of arrival.

It is our conviction that the above remarks sufficiently substantiate a call to study communist memory politics as a phenomenon that transgressed political, ethnic and cultural borders existing within the Soviet-ruled East-Central Europe, that is, in a transnational way. What do we mean by this?

First of all, we mean comparative research on all concrete national cases using the same (or at least unified as much as possible) set of study questions. Secondly, a separate subset of questions aimed at grasping those aspects of a studied problem that overtly transgressed national borders ought to be developed. These seem particularly important as we talk about the process resulting from occurrences that happened beyond the range of control of any single country of the region. A special research questionnaire should be devised and then empirically tested on source materials of the same genre, originating in different countries. A necessary condition of developing such a questionnaire is to work out a theoretical model of the historical process under study – a model able to grasp its basic constituents (including those truly transnational ones) while (1) not losing the multiplicity and diversity of concrete phenomena through which it manifested itself in different countries and (2) enabling researchers to identify national similarities and differences, and typical and atypical forms (including mechanisms that produced such diversification).[13]

The multi-faceted nature of the presence of communism in East-Central Europe encourages scholars to probe various research approaches and different methodological traditions. One could ask, then: Why do we advocate commemoration, collective memory, and memory politics as a focal point for our study? After all, the above-mentioned community of fates and experiences include many other aspects of East-Central Europeans' existence during the times of communist rule. We argue (and will hopefully elucidate clearly below) that research focused on

13 We advocate seeking all basic types of comparisons discerned by historically oriented social scientists – contextual, generalizing, individualizing as well as varianting. See, e.g., Theda Skocpol, Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1980), pp. 174–197; Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), *passim.*

collective memory and memory politics – perceived as spheres of a certain social practice (precisely, a practice of commemoration) – demonstrates a significant potential for synthesizing multifarious issues of the history of communist society and state. Thanks to this approach, researchers can encompass or take into account several phenomena and processes that belong to different spheres and/or aspects of historical reality, and which for this reason are perceived as separate or independent and – are accordingly – investigated separately.

If communist memory politics is analyzed in a way mentioned above, three basic areas of research become discernible:

- Governing assumptions shared by those who defined and/or implemented communist memory politics;
- Concrete actions carried out within societal spaces (together with their products) aimed at (1) the creation new realms of memory and (2) deconstruction/transformation/annihilation of the realms of memory that previously existed within the collective memory of a given society;
- Final normative (i.e., desired from the perspective of communist ruling elite) structure and shape of the collective memory of that society.

The first area includes studies on, among others, various aspects of communist ontology or metaphysics. For example, in order to reveal the basic premises and fundamental directions of memory politics one needs to take into account the communist philosophy of history as well as the communist perception of social reality. Many other ideas that were less implicit or philosophical are equally important object of study – from basic commemorative guidelines formulated by top party executives down to the "technical" directives, developed within the lower echelons of the ruling caste and specifying which concrete historical message should be transmitted in a given context and what means of social communication ought to be used for this purpose. Of course, one should always take into account the fact that "positive" directives were usually accompanied – no less importantly – by negative ones (i.e., those aimed at suppression of undesirable elements of existing memory) – memory politics is as much a process of construction as that of deconstruction. One needs to investigate all subsequent stages of decision-making processes with respect to commemorative undertakings, together with their ideological as well as bureaucratic aspects.

As for the second area, public festivities seem to be the principal object of study. These rituals were well developed in all communist countries and the party has always greatly appreciated their role in stabilizing and legitimizing the system. References to the past were frequent during such events. Indeed, some of them were fully developed public commemorations of past facts and figures (first and foremost those referring to the early history of communist party of a given country and its "ancestors" – real and/or imagined, but also to other events and figures that were interpreted in an "appropriate" way). Researchers ought to systematically reveal the forms, content and axiology of such references, overt and concealed alike, and such tasks require (among others) a detailed analysis of festivities,

including: its organizational schema, ways of controlling and directing masses, spaces (if any) reserved for their spontaneous participation, uses of open air space versus restricted areas of meeting halls, the role of secret police and its informal collaborators, and so on. Naturally, there were several other spheres of social life routinely used by communists to disseminate messages related to the past. One can list educative practices here, then literary production, mass media production (daily, weekly and monthly press, radio and later also TV) and – last but surely not least – complicated and often protracted efforts to organize public spaces. Each of these spheres is equally important and worthy of study from the perspective of memory politics. Additionally, each of them requires the interested scholar to take into account many different and complex aspects of a given sphere. Let us briefly consider just two examples.

- Education. Here one needs to study not only the content of school history, but also the national culture and language textbooks, requirements defined in ministerial guidelines (together with recommended methods of their implementation and control), everyday life at schools, ways of engaging both teachers and pupils in historical/commemorative ceremonies, educational excursions, and many more.
- Public spaces as endowed with meanings.[14] Here one needs to study the aspects of "spatial semiotics" that convey meanings referring to the past, such as street names and their evolution (together with an analysis of – sometimes multilevel – decision-making process of giving a street the name), as well as the parallel practices of erecting (and destroying) monuments and commemorative plaques. This is followed by state-owned enterprises and companies – under communism these were frequently named after past figures and events, and such names were usually communicated within the public space in a very visible way. The architecture itself should also be analyzed – under communism it was widely used to convey ideological messages including historical and commemorative ones. Likewise, urban landscapes (those actually built and those which remained as projects) turned into "landscapes of memory"[15] form another object of research, as well as cemeteries and their commemorative usage (a topic bordering on commemorative role of festivities, as well) and many others.

The major research goal within the third area must be a systematizing reconstruction of the structure and content of "official memory," that is, that advocated by

14 Or, as Florian Znaniecki would put it, as endowed with "humanist coefficient." Florian Znaniecki, *Współczynnik humanistyczny* [*A Humanist coefficient*] (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2011).

15 For more about this idea see, e.g., Kurt Schlőgel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit: űber Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik* (Műnchen: Carl Hansel Verlag, 2003); Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

authorities as the intended collective memory for a country's citizenry. A memory politics researcher should reveal which historical canon[16] was postulated by them, in the shape of a catalogue of realms and images of memory with its hierarchy and mutual relations. Among issues to investigate here are usage of metaphors associated with them, their content, and the values transmitted through them. Such analyses should take the internal dynamics of the communist canon into consideration – over the course of time (and because of the ideological needs of a given "stage" of social and political affairs) the position of a given realm of memory might have changed: it could advance from the rear to the "canon's forehead,"[17] fade into the background, be withdrawn from the proposed canon, or added to it, and so on. In the course of all these transformations, the given realm of memory itself may also undergo significant changes. Eventually, every realm of memory is necessarily the dynamic product of a compromise. It resembles a Freudian "screen memory" in this respect.[18] Its current shape, content, and axiological meaning is constantly socially negotiated and, while promoting a certain historical/commemorative message, this realm suppresses other messages and meanings possibly associated with it.

While perusing the above-defined field of memory politics, it would be reasonable to discern several distinct spaces of commemorative practice, together with the major memory transmitters[19] associated with them. Among others, mass-media production might be conceptualized as such a distinct space and, if one particularly thinks of the press, a commemorative article or editorial could be recognized as an exemplary transmitter. Thus, a study of such texts (their rhetoric, content, meaning, frequency and order of appearance) forms a necessary component of research. We could perceive school and non-school education, festivities, public spaces (each having its own specific subset of historical memory transmitters – possibly changeable with reference to time, place/country and so on) in this way, too. This perspective – so it seems – would be fruitful especially when studying the first and second of the major research areas listed above.

Also, one should bear in mind that communist memory politics usually had more than one dimension and this is also the case for advocated historical canon, too. As for the latter, there was, as already mentioned, the canon's 'forehead' – a

16 A related set of realms of memory that constitute a given society/nation's collective memory within a given span of time. See Szpociński, "Kanon historyczny."

17 A set of realms of memory considered most fundamental and most universally recognized within a given society.

18 See Tomasz Pawelec, "Pamięć historyczna jako screen memory" [Historical Memory as Screen Memory] in: *Pamięć i polityka historyczna. Doświadczenia Polski i jej sąsiadów* [*Memory and the Politics of History: Polish Experiences and Those of the Neighbouring Countries*], eds. Sławomir Nowinowski, Jan Pomorski and Rafał Stobiecki (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), pp. 141–156.

19 Tools/instruments of social communication most commonly used within a given space of commemorative practice.

set of realms of memory disseminating nationwide historical messages and meanings of principal importance. There were also the lower ranks of realms of memory, auxiliary with relation to the major ones, carrying meanings that were complementary or supplementary ramifications. Eventually, there were local realms of memory, important for local segments of a given national community, referring to the distinctiveness (or rather peculiarity) of its historical experiences, to regional differences, and local identities. In other words, it was "central" or "centralized" memory politics as well as "local" or "localized" ones. Scholars are usually inclined to study the former, that is, commemorative practices (and messages) introduced on a national scale and more or less uniformly realized within a given country. They tend to forget that, within the gaps and cracks of centralized memory politics, the local form always continued to be practiced – and these were of much greater importance than many researchers are willing to assume. In fact, when the ruling group was able to make use of specifically local context in order to "anchor" its historical symbols/messages in the local tradition, its success in remodeling a given part or strata of collective memory was undoubtedly greater. Thus, the task to identify moments and places where such local memory politics was being implemented is important, as is the need to delineate its position within different spaces of commemorative practice (some of which were more suitable than others).

While conceptualizing the discussed field of study a chronological dimension of communist memory politics should be taken into account. This has two aspects. The first refers to historical past perceived as the object of commemoration, while the second is related to the detailed chronology of communist rule within East-Central Europe from 1944–1945 to 1989. As for the former, the fact was that the scale of "political exploitation" of subsequent historical epochs varied from country to country. Undoubtedly this would be a differentiating ("national," so to speak) element, rooted in the specific historical experience of particular national community. In addition to registering and explaining such differences, researchers should try to correlate these variances with successive stages of "building of real socialism" within a particular country as well as on the scale of the whole bloc – this is where the latter comes in. For example, the consecutive social and political crises of Polish People's Republic (such as October 1956, December 1970, "Solidarity" movement and the introduction of martial law in early 1980s) always resulted in changes in the Polish government's memory politics. It seems clear that similar relations would be found in case of other countries. Similarly, one can think of such events as the violent de-Stalinization, national uprising, the Soviet invasion in Hungary in 1956, and the subsequent emergence of Kadar's liberalizing "gulash socialism" and their impact on regime's memory politics. Another obvious example would be the development of selective autonomy of the Ceaucescu regime in Romania from the late 1960s onewards, and the subsequent vicissitudes of the historical ideas advocated by the "Conducator." It would seem legitimate to ask to what extent such relationships could transgress political borders within the region, that is, whether crises and turbulences in one country had any impact on memory politics of the

other ones. After all, it is clear that there was at least one such relation that operated constantly, namely: the turbulences and political changes in the Soviet Union were always affecting the actions of its subordinate regimes, including their legitimizing strategies (and those commemorative/historical among them).

Before a thorough investigation based on the research model described above can be undertaken on a full scale, a pilot study, testing the proposed questionnaire and "calibrating" conceptual tools would be required. The authors of this chapter have already attempted such a study, in a survey of communist memory politics in Poland within a limited chronological span of full-scale Stalin period (1948–1956).[20] It was our assumption that at that particular time communist memory politics was the most radical and expressive and therefore it would be easier to reconstruct it.[21] In that study, we investigated several spaces of commemorative practice, trying to reconstruct the workings of their major memory transmitters. Our focus was mainly on the second of the above described major research areas and we attempted to discern cases of centralized and localized commemoration. In addition to numerous factual findings, we were able to confirm our initial hypothesis that communist exploitation of the past was indeed played out in many areas at the same time. A comparison to a concert by a large symphony orchestra is not unrealistic here: the Memory politics of Polish communists was played on various instruments, or rather was distributed on numerous commemorative spaces and memory transmitters that were carefully orchestrated. Speaking more generally, it was not a domain of rude and futile propaganda, but an area of quite intelligent and persuasive management of social imaginary that not only exploited various historical myths and presumptions spread within the Poles' national community in quite an effective way, but was also intensely present in surprisingly many spheres of social life.[22] Maybe, though, this is not so much of a surprise: As we already mentioned, it was a "perekovka dush" after all… And as such it surely needs to be studied more thoroughly and transnationally.

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20 Malczewska-Pawelec, Pawelec, *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej*.

21 Memory politics of earlier period (1944/1945 to 1948) remained concentrated on defining practical guidelines for the best ways of the exploitation of the past by the ruling group and on "fighting" the remnants of former commemorative practices. Naturally, comparative study of this initial period in all the countries of gradually taking shape Soviet zone of late 1940s must be included as an important element of full-scale research on this topic. As for later periods, it is our opinion that communist memory politics became more subtle and elusive in its open appearance, though still radical in its intended results.

22 It should be added that even at this preliminary stage of research we have not eschewed comparative perspective. However, our comparison was chronologically rather than spatially oriented: communist memory politics in Poland of the Stalin period has been studied as contrasted with that practiced by Polish ruling elite between the two world wars.

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